News from Ed Markey

United States Congress · Massachusetts Seventh District

STATEMENT OF EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA)
ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE AND SIERRA STUDENT COALITION RALLY

It's my pleasure to be here today with Rep. Inslee, Melinda Pierce of the Sierra Club, Cindy Shogun of the Alaska Wilderness League and the students of the Sierra Student Coalition.

We are here today because there are certain places in this country that should just be left wild and untouched for future generations. A month ago, I introduced the Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act to make sure that the Arctic Refuge is one of the places we are wise enough to set aside. So far I have been joined by 135 other Members of Congress, like Jay Inslee, and, with your help, there will be a lot more.

We all know that there is a very vigorous pro-drilling lobby in this town, and they hope to strike it rich this year, but instead they are going to strike out.

Skeptics say "oh sure. The President is for drilling the refuge, the vice-president is for drilling, the Interior secretary is for drilling, and the republican leaders and committee chairs are for drilling. Who is going to say NO to this onslaught?"

Well, the answer is you are, the American People, that's who.

The American People sense in their bones that the value of the Arctic Refuge should never be measured in barrels of oil or employee work days or drops in the budget deficit bucket.

It is clear that the Arctic Refuge is now in the same category as Yellowstone or Yosemite --that there are places so special, so unique, and so unspoiled in our natural world that they should be set aside for future generations as national treasures and protected against energy development.

You have seen right through the attempts of the drilling lobby to invade our Wildlife Refuges as a strategy to reduce our energy import dependence. Clearly an administration that supports new tax incentives to buy SUVs that use even more oil per mile than this year's model is not concerned about energy independence. Opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling has nothing to do with energy independence – it has everything to do with continuing US dependence on the oil companies by bulldozing our public lands to buy another 6 months-worth of oil 10 years from now.

In his budget, the President tried to wrap opening the Refuge in green by designating leasing revenues for renewable energy research. He just doesn't get it. He thinks the only reason to support alternative energy is as an excuse to start drilling. We should develop alternative energy to leave the Arctic Refuge undeveloped forever!

So remember – Congress is a stimulus response organism. And because you are organizing your friends and family, because you are getting the American people to call, to send letters and faxes, Congress is going to respond. Last year, our bipartisan coalition fell narrowly short of putting this issue to rest once and for all. We need to swing only 9 votes to our side to change this debate forever.

We are back, we are determined, we are energized and, most importantly, we are supported by people like you. And you know what the difference is between you and the people who want to drill in the Refuge?

You are right, and they are wrong.

The law says it is illegal to drill in the refuge. We will fight in the Budget committee, we will fight in the resources committee, we will fight in the energy committee, and we will fight on the floor of the House and Senate.

The message is simple – The American people <u>own</u> this refuge – not the oil industry, not the state, not even the President himself. It is a Wildlife Refuge, not a Gas Station! To those who want to invade this public property for a little private gain, the American people are saying loud and clear, "Stay off my land."

Rep. Markey is the chief House sponsor of HR 770, the Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act of 2001, with Rep. Nancy Johnson and 150 other co-sponsors. Visit <u>www.house.gov/markey</u> **for more information.**

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